## THE PAMPAS OF ARGENTINA SEEN BY CLEMENCEAU

## Former Premier of France Tells of the Great Cattle-Raising Country of South America and Its People.

By Georges Clemenceau.

This is the eighth of a series of ardicles giving his impressions of South America written by the former Premier of France.

VERY capital is a world in itself, a world in which national and foreign elements blend; but to understand the life of a nation one must go out into the country.

A vast territory, ten times the size of France, extending from Patagonia to Paraguay and Bolivia, will naturally offer the greatest diversity of soil and climate, entailing conditions of labor and existence of customs, and sometimes of morals, which will differ still more.

can in the same way show ethnical groups with sufficiently marked features (such as may be seen in our French provinces) to withstand the events of a long history that has not been able even to destroy or even modify their characteristics.

Its is quite another matter when on a continent with no history at all you get men of every origin spread over it, brought thither by a community of interest and hope to fertilize its soil with the powerful alluvion of their labor.

Li have already said what racial characteristics subsist. The colonist will of course at first do all he can to remain what the land of his birth has made him; the first evidence of this is his tendency to fall into groups and form national colonics. But the land of his adoption will in time surely force upon him the inevitable conditions of a new mede of life, the very necessity of adapting himself to changed conditions making of him a new creature, to be later definitely molded by success.

The pampas are not the Argentine. They form, however, so predominant a part that they have shaped the man and the race by imposing on them their organization of agricultural labor and the exploitation of their natural resources. While manufacturers are still in a rudimentary state and are likely to remain so for a long time to come owing to the lack of coal, the pampas from the Andes to the ocean offer an immense plain of the same alluvial soil .rom end to end. ready to respond in the same degree to the same effort of stock raising or agriculture. An identical stretch of unbroken ground, with identical surface, identical poels of subterranean water, no special, features in any spot to call for other than the unchanging life of the campo.

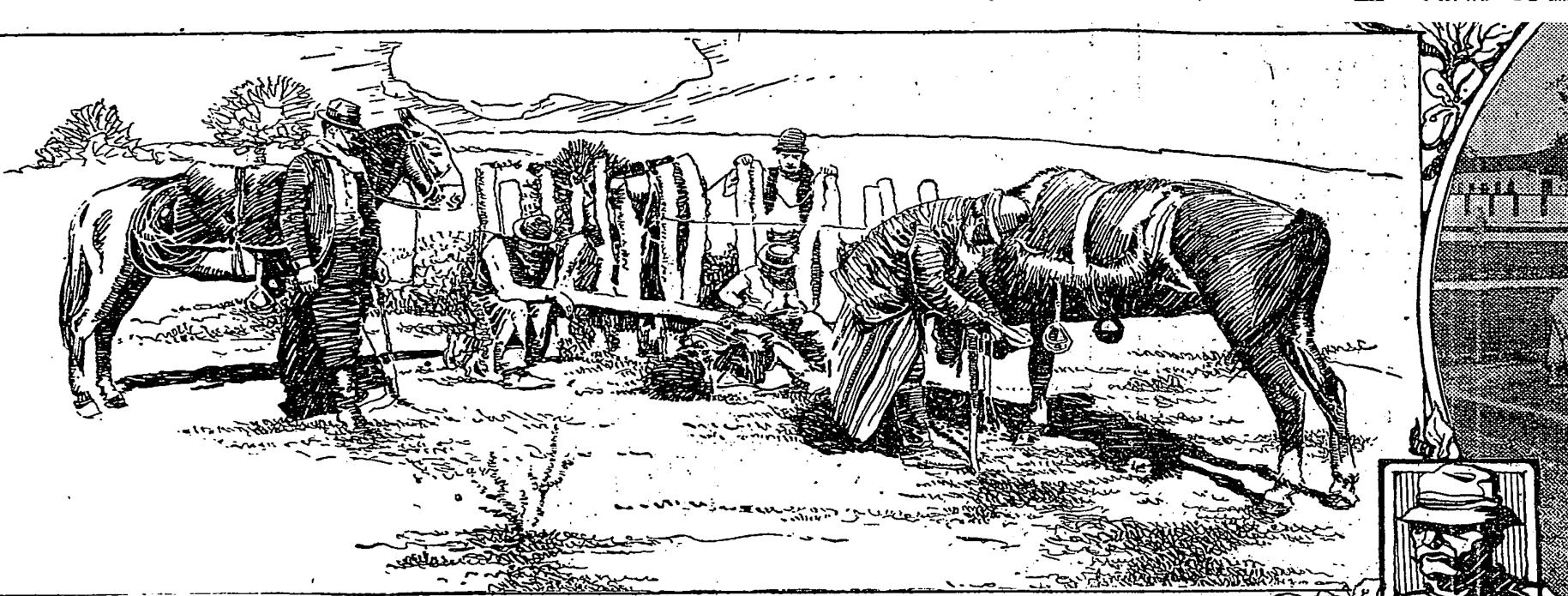
Naturally the first experiments were made in the most rudimentary fashion on the half-wild herds of cattle that could not be improved unless the European market were thrown open.

As soon as this outlet was assured the whole effort of skill and money was directed toward the improvement of stock, and the progress made in a few years of work far exceeded the brightest hopes of those early days.

in the folds of the poncho, (a blanket with a hole in it for the head to pass through,) is incumbered with a whip whose handle serves on occasion as a mallet, and a lasso, with or without metal balls, coiled behind his saddle. He makes a picturesque enough figure in the monotonous expanse of earth and sky, where rancho or tree, beast or man, stand out in high relief against a background of glaring. light. Without sign or syllable, his eyes fixed on the empty horizon, the man passes through the silence of infinite solitude, rising from the nothingness of the horizon at one point to sink again into nothingness at another like a ghost. When riding in a troop they talk together in low tones. There are none of those out-

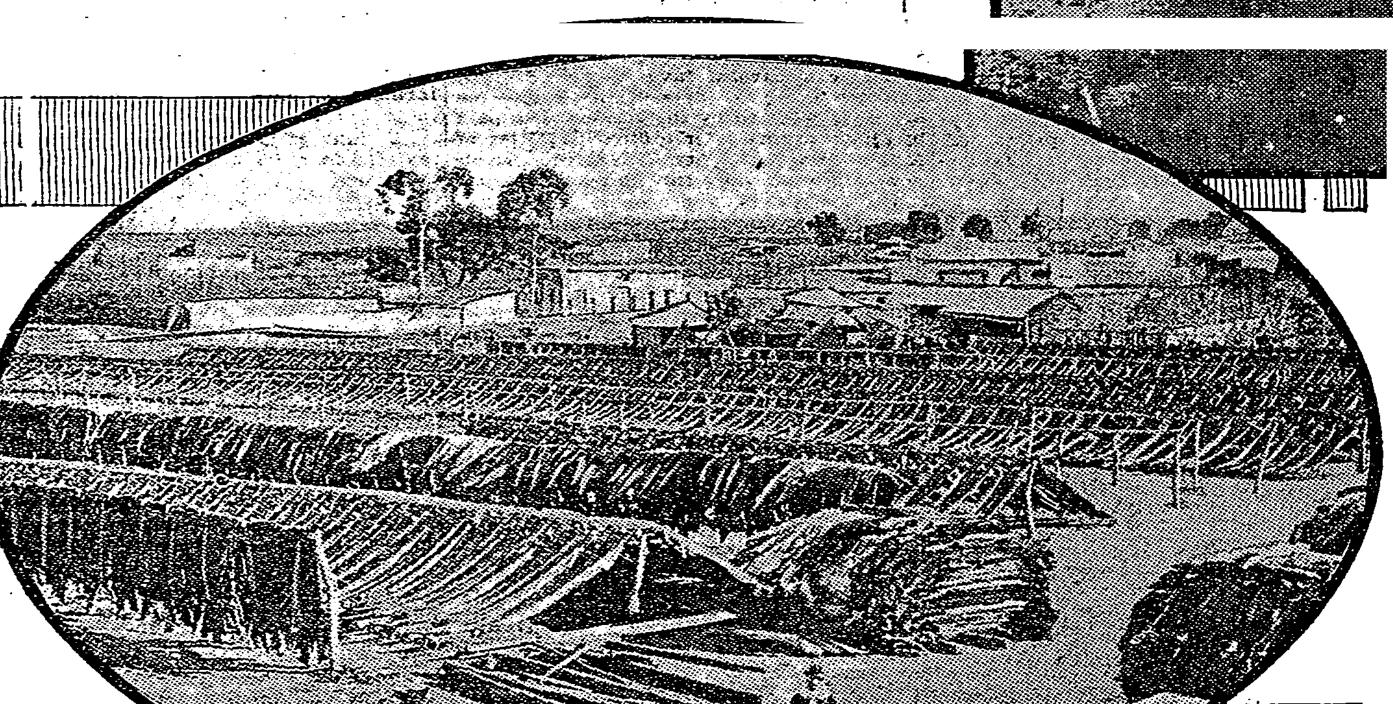
difficulties of the road. Here there are no police regulations to annoy the motorist. No other law but your own fancy and a certain thought for the savory lunch that is awaiting you at the next estancia When you reach it you will discover that the monstrous herds on the horizon were merely these gentle creatures, placid in their happy ignorance of the fell designs that are the hidden causes of man's kindness to them. Do we astonish them? Or are they wholly indifferent? Their eyes are fixed on our panting machines as ours are on the grazing beasts, and not a spark is struck by the meeting of the two in telligences, the one so calmly definite and the other too soon checked in its effort to understand. Obedient to the reb-





burses of fun you might expect in a land? of sunshine, but a gravity born of men thus brought face to face with nature in the pitiless light of sky and earth where no fold or break in the surface arrests the glance or fixes the attention. Still, there are those gigantic herds of horned cattle or horses which people a very appreciable portion of the melancholy plain—"green in Winter, yellow in Summer." I say nothing of the great flocks of sheep because there were none in districts which I visited. When you talk of a herd of ten thousand cows you make some impression on even a big farmer of the Charolais. Well, I can assure you that out in the pampas ten thousand head of cattle is a small affair. You see a dark shadow that rises on the horizon and might be either a village or a group of haycocks, until the vague shifting of the mass suggests to your mind the idea of some form of life. The lines show clearer, groups break off and stand





Drying Hides in Argentina.

And as at the same time a powerful impetus was given to wheat growing, the pampas from one end to the other of their vast extent immediately took on a dual aspect: cattle farms (herds grazing on natural or artificial pastures) and acres of grain. (wheat, oats, maize, and flax.) this is the only picture that the pampas offer or ever can offer to the

The system of cattle breeding, primitive in the extreme at a distance from railroads, improves in proportion as the line draws nearer; wherever the iron road passes there is an immediate development of land under cultivation.

All this goes to make up a man of the campo, the estanciero, colonist, peon, gaucho, or whatever other name he may be called: certain conditions of living and working are forced upon him from which there is no escape.

बैद्धे hether landed proprietor, farmer, servaffic or agricultural laborer, the vastness of the surfaces which open in front of him, the distance between inhabited dwellings, the roughness of the roads, leave him no other means of communication but the horse, which abounds everywhere and can be unceremoniously borrowed on occasion. The man of the campo is a horseman. He is certainly not an elegant horseman whose riding would be appreciated at the Saumur cavalry school. No curb, only a plain bit, is used, whose first effect is to bring down the animal's head and throw him out of balance, while his rider, to remedy this defect, raises his hands as high as his face, thus completing the unfortunate whole by his uffstable seat. As very often happens in similar circumstances, instinct and determination more or less making up for all mistakes, the rider manages approximately to keep on his beast's back, thanks partly to the fact that the horse is rarely required to go at more than a moderate pace over level ground. The hoof never by any chance can strike on a stone. thisigh it may be caught in a hole: the active little "creole" horse excels in avoiding this danger. One can ask no more of him. (I shall have something to sayislater of the way wild horses are

on his enormous saddle of sheepskin the peon, or gaucho, his hat pulled well down over his eyes, his shoulders draped

out, pointed horns appear, and at last you find you are watching the tranquil passage of a monstrous herd, whose outlines are stenciled in black upon the whiteness of the sky-line like the Chinese shadow pictures I once saw at the "Chat Noir" when the flocks of the pairiarchs were flung upon the sheet. So distinct are the shapes here that you lose the sense of distance and are astonished at the harmony of nonchalant impulse, as irresistible as slow, which can thus set in movement this huge living mass and make it pass before us like a vision of Fate. The phantasy of a dream all the more striking that it changes so rapidly; withdraw your eyes a moment from the picture and it is entirely altered. The heavy mass of migrating cattle seems now to have taken root at the opposite extremity of the horizon, while in the depths of the luminous distance shadowy patches of haze more or less distinct betoken further living bodies, some stationary, some in motion, mirages of the pampas of which none takes any heed, but which made on me a powerful impression, for I saw in them the whole tragedy of this land, from the just of grass on which the eyes of the beasts first saw the light down to the last step on that fateful journey which ends at the slide of the slaughterhouse.

The rapid traveling of the motor car multiplies the points of view. The vast estates on the pampas, which run from two to a hundred square miles in extent, are further divided into large lots bounded by wire fencing, which stop the trespassing of herds. The roads are marked out by a double row of wire. What dust and what mud may be found thereon, according to weather conditions, may be imagined, since there is not the smallest pebble to be found there. Yet vehicles do. it appears, venture along these paths, and even arrive at their destination. You may also meet flocks of sheep and oxen, on them: and families of pigs engaged in breakfasting on a slieep that has been relieved of its skin. In less than an hour its bones, picked clean, are scattered along the way, where in process of time they will contribute precious phosphates to the soil. Naturally, on such a "road." the automobile does not yearn to travel: rather does it "take to the fields" and revenge itself on the billiard table of the

immense prairie-revenges itself for the

enque (whip) of the "peon," the herd which in motion looks so threatening, allows itself to be stopped or led by the cries and rapid movements of the horsemen going at a hand-gallop. The sight of any object that waves in the wind (whether coat or poncho) is equally ef-

fectual. If one excepts the cows which are penned for milking, (three quarts a day as an average.) the only apparent relations between man and beast consist in the easy use of this instrument of terror. Nothing is done for the flocks except to provide the mill which automatically feeds their water troughs, and to see to the safe arrival of the bulls intended to improve the breed, and to select those from the herd destined for the freezing machines. For all their other needs Providence is expected to provide. Quite a different régime from that prevailing in our French stock farms. Of shelter against wind or sun there is none. The grass is there when the drought has not burned in up: also an ugly thistle which no one troubles to pull up and which sometimes overruns the pasture. Of Nature's scourges the drought is the most to be feared, for it falls with fearful suddenness on great stretches of the campo. In the absence of rain neither turf nor forage nor harvest can be looked for. For the cattle death is certain. Winter in any case is a hard season for them. Their coats lose their gloss, their flanks fall in. and their pointed bones, witness to the creature's sufferings, which the icy breath of the pampero does nothing to assuage. With the Spring comes the hope of rain. But if this hope is betrayed nothing can save innumerable herds from starvation and death. Some trusses of forage are always stored for the most precious of the stock, but to feed the herd is out of the question. The pampas then become one vast cemetery where hundreds of thousands of dead cattle are lying in heaps beyond all possibility of burial. It is the custom in the pampas to leave the body of the beast that dies by the way to the tender mercies of the wind and the sun, the rain and the earth, into whose wide open pores the remains are with the help of time little by little absorbed. The birds of prey and dogs are valuable assistants, but wholly insufficient. One of my friends told me that it

spectacle of putrefying carcasses lying about the pampas and seen either on my walks or from the railway train—some even lying festering in pools close to dwelling houses—I cannot say that my olfactory nerves were ever troubled. It is true we were then in the Winter, and it is the sun that has the most fearful power on decaying flesh. I occasionally spoke of the danger of poisonous fly bites, but I got only vague replies.

to return to the farm from the campo

bearing a horrible smell about them. For

my part, if I was often revolted by the

In my personal experience, whenever I met something disagreeable on my walks about the pampas, the carcass was invariably completely mummified, the skin being so thoroughly tanned that the object might have been carefully prepared for a museum of comparative anatomy. But when death was recent, and the Summer season had set in with its attendant flies, I should certainly avoid the neighborhood.

It will surprise no one to hear that took the liberty of calling the attention of two or three statesmen to the dangers of this unfortunate custom and the detestable impression it is bound to make on travelers. The reply was invariably that the Argentine was suffering, and would no doubt continue to suffer for some time to come, from a lack of hands and that the thousands of animals which under normal conditions perished in the pampas could never find grave diggers: when, therefore, a dry season killed off as many as ten thousand sheep on a single ranch, there was no resource but to bow to the inevitable.

We see that cattle rearing in the Ar-

gentine has its ups and downs. At every turn Nature intervenes with her elements of success and distaster. Man's rôle is to furnish a minimum of labor, and by the force of circumstances he is compelled to reckon on quantity for his modicum of success; but the fact does not prevent his successful efforts to improve the quality. As I have already said, he will give any price to secure a fine strain. It is to England that he is obliged to go for his stock, since that country is the principal market for his meat. On all hands I was told that the results were most satisfactory. As regardst their breed of horses the result is manifest. But for cattle, I take the liberty of disagreeing with those who declare that the Argentine can send to our slaughter-houses at La Villette meat as fine as our own at half its price. If, however, I am firmly convinced that our palate would not readily be satissied with the frozen meat that seems to please the English, I am quite aware that there is a distinction to be drawn between the choice beasts, generally magnificent, that make such a show at exhibitions and the common run of the average flock among which truth compels me to admit there are some very indifferent animals. It will require a long time to equal the fine produce of our French strains, a change in the conditions of cattle rearing farms, for the Argentine ever to equal the product of our French breeders. It can never be otherwise as long as the young beast, bred somewhat at hanhazard and born on the open campo between the corpses of some of its relatives. is left to grow up as best it can, exposed to every change of temperature. Everywhere I came upon young calves abandoned by their mothers as soon as born. and only sought out when the time for feeding came round; it cannot be "said that the stock would bear comparison with the average produce of a Norman or

Charolais byre. Not all the quality of its mother's milk will suffice to make up for the ground lost by neglect.

Vineyard in Argentina.

As I have said, the troops of horses seem to have lost the least. I speak less of their appearance than of their action, which often seemed to me remarkable. You cannot imagine the pleasure it is to glide swiftly across the pampas in a motor car with a troop of young horses on either side of you, neighing and galloping to keep up with the machine. But, do not, pray, call them "wild horses."

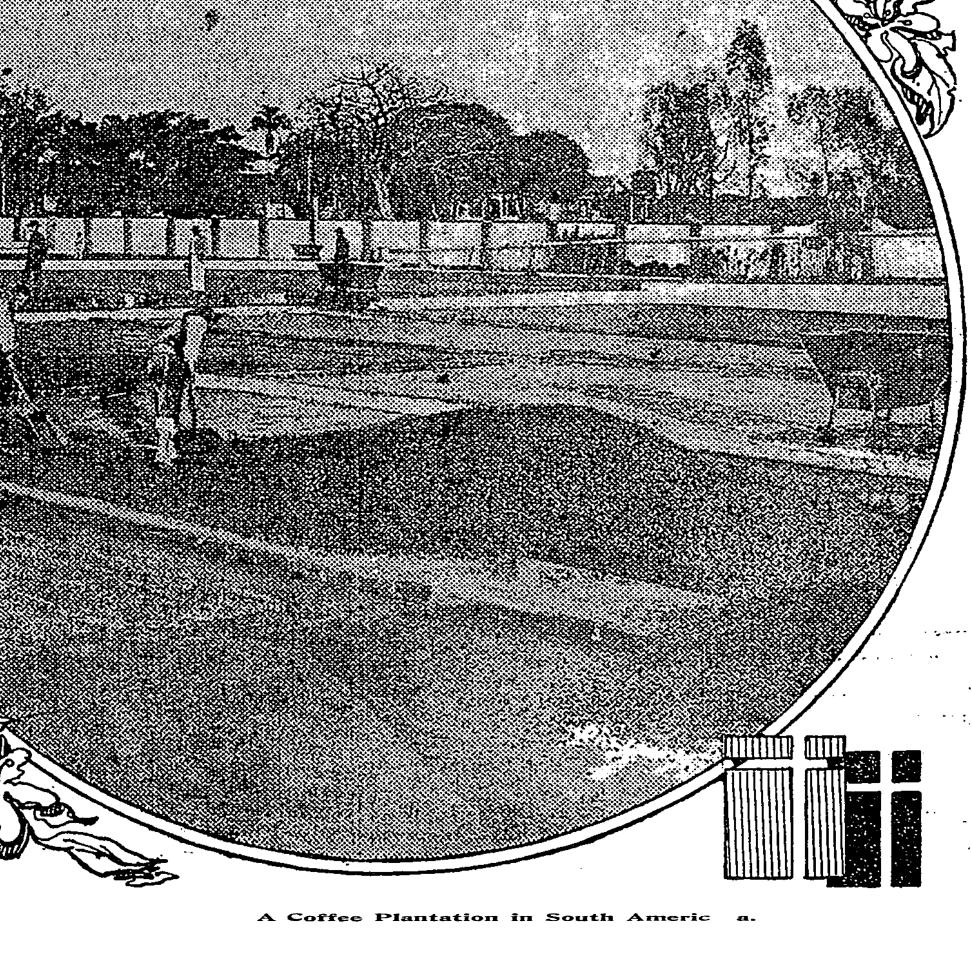
Tradition to the contrary notwithstand-

ing, I believe there are no wild horses in the Argentine. There are horses, and there are horsemen who treat them brutally under the pretext of breaking them in. This is a survival of ancient times which not even the universality of the horse in civilized countries can destroy. Any English lord will get more out of a young horse by quiet skill and kindness than can ever be obtained by the useless and cruel lasso, to which I shall return later.

return later. I have shown you the pampas alive with the swarms of its new civilization. We are far enough from the romantic descriptions so dear to story-tellers. We all know that the Redskin of North America bears no resemblance to the portraits painted of him by Chateaubriand or Fenimore Cooper. The pampas in full process of evolution are getting more human and losing their distinctive features. They were once as bare, to quote the joke of a poet, now a member of the Académie de France, "as the speech of an Academician'; man has undertaken to raise orchards, groves, and even forests. Once they were the refuge of more or less innocent beasts. The son of Adam by the mere fact of his presence treads out all life that cannot be made of use to him-

I said that the ombu was the only tree that flourished in the pampas, for the simple reason that the locusts devour every other vegetable product, including clover, crops, and trees of all sorts. The damage caused by the crickets which descend in clouds and destroy in a moment the harvest is only too well known by our Algerian colonists. Wherever this cloud descends vegetation vanishes. In a few hours every leaf is gone from the tree, and only the kernel clean and dry is left on the branch as a mute witness of the irreparable disaster. I did not see the locusts, but I was shown the result of their work, most conscientlously carried out. Men who have put long months of toil into their land see with impotent rage all the fruit of their toil swept off in the twinkling of an eye. I confess that the tales that were told me would suffice to prevent my taking such a risk, The government lays out some millions yearly to assuage in some sort the mischief done. But the only remedy applied up to the present consists in making such a din on the approach of the baneful host as to induce them to go on further and land at a neighbor's. As altruism, this course is not above reproach. Another way is to dig ditches in which to bury them alive, but this is mere child's play. If you inquire the origin of the scourge you will get the sulky reply that the pest comes from Chaco and that some men have traveled thither to verify the statement. but the country proving impenetrable, the project has for the moment been abandoned. I hasten to place these insufficient data béfore the European public. Alone victorious over the locusts by the repugnance it inspires and over the man

by its glorious uselessness, the ombu here



and there spreads its triumphant arms near some rancho, probably called into being by the fact of its presence on the spot, and occasionally on the pasturage of the campo it may be seen extending its shelter to some quadruped that shuns the rays of the sun. Around his estancia the farmer plants his orchard and his ornamental thickets, which flourish or not at the will of the crickets. After the passage of the destructive horde it requires at least two years for the country to recover. The eucalytus, owing to its rapid growth, gives very good results, but the favorite tree in the pampas is the "paraiso," Tree of Paradise, which is admirable rather for its flower than its form and withstands to some extent the locusts through sheer perseverance. Occasionally one comes upon a small wood in which the "ornevo," the cardinal, sings and the dove coos.

For the campo has a whole population of running or flying creatures whose cardinal virtue is that of being satisfied with little in the shape of a shelter. The gardens and parks of the estancias provide a natural asylum for a world of winged songsters, in whom man, softened by isolation, has not yet inspired terror.

But the pampas in their nudity are not without signs of life. There is the guanaco, smaller than the llama, larger than the stork, which has already retreated far from Buenos Aires. The gray ostrich, formerly abundant, has been decimated by the lasso of the gaucho, who, at the risk of getting a kick that may rip him open, attacks the beast that struggles wildly in the bonds of the cruel rope, drags out his handsomest feathers and then lets him go. The really wild ostrich has disappeared from the pampas. Flocks of them may be seen from the window of the train, but they are all confined in fenced parks and are really in captivity. I cannot be expected to give a list of all the creatures that swarm on or under the soil of the campo. There is nothing to be said about the prairie dog, which has been systematically destroyed on account of the damage it does. I must mention the "tatou," a small creature with a pointed muzzle, something between a lizard and a tortoise, and with the shell of the latter. It makes holes similar to those of our burrowers. The gaucho considers its flesh excellent, declaring that it tastes like pork. Perhaps the surest way of getting the taste of pork is to address one's self to the pig himself, here popularly known as the "creole pig," a lovable little black beast that plays with the children in tiny muddy pools in the neighborhood of the ranchos. Passing by the hare, (imported from

Europe,) the small partridge and the martinette, (timamou,) to which I shall return presently, I may mention the plover (abundant) and the birds of carrion which settle all disputes for the possession of the ground according to the dictates of a boundless appetite, and the small owl. so tame that it rises every few yards with a cheerful cry, to come I down again a few paces further on, following all your movements with a questioning eye. At the mouth of its burrow, or on the stake that marks the boundary of the rancho, its pretty form is a feature in the landscape. Finally, 1 must not forget the ornevo, to be found near the estancias and in the woods, a charming, tame little bird that chatters all the time, like a good many people, and builds a mud nest in the branches, in the shape of an oven, divided into two apartments, whose tiny doors open always to the north, whence comes the warmth. If you lose yourself in the forest you need no compass but this. The gauchos hold the bird in pious respect. Legend has it that he never works on Sundays at his nest. Here is one who wants no legislation for a "repos hebdomadaire any more than he does for the regulation of the liquor sale. Oh, the superiority of our "inferior brothers"! . I heard a good deal about the great

lakes in which thousands of black-necked swans and rose-pink flamingoes may be seen at play. I was never able to go and visit these fascinating birds. To make up for this. M. Onelli presented me with two handsome black-throated swans, which, however, were not able to stand the climate of Normandy.

Having thus sketched the principal features of the setting, it remains to fill in the picture of the rancho and estancia.

'I have shown you the primitive cabin of the Robinson Crusoe of the campo, I have drawn a picture of the colonist and the gaucho; it is not necessary to go back to him again. I have shown the divers elements of his existence. The railway has not changed anything in it except by abolishing the interminable rides of earlier days, and the tiresome monotony of convoying freight wagons to the town markets. The railway, moreover, brings within reach of the ranchero the conveniences of modern furnishings. In the huts of the half-castes, near Tucuman, the only piece of furniture 1 saw was a pair of trestles on which was laid the mat which served as seat, bed, or table-the kitchen being always outside. 'In the pampas, dwellings that look modest and even less than modest, generally boast an easy chair, a chest of drawers, with a clock, a sewing machine, and gramophone, which, when fortune comes is completed by a piano. The gramophone is the theatre of the pampas. It brings with it orchestra, song, words. and the whole "art" paraphernalia-suited to the aesthetic sense of its hearers. Thus, on all sides, dreadful nasal sounds twang out to the great joy of the youth of the colony, whose artistic career will probably end in a colonist's "fauteuil," (stall, also easy chair.)

The morals of the campo are what the conditions of life there have made them. Men who are crowded together in large cities are exposed to many temptations. When too far removed from the restraint of public opinion the facility of abuse is no less dangerous. In all circumstances a witness acts as a curb. In the pampas as it used to be the witness, nine times out of ten, became an accomplice. Thus between the fear of a distant and vague police force and the ever-present fear of the Indian, the gaucho naturally became a soldier of fortune, prepared for any bold stroke. With his dagger in his belt, his gun on his shoulder, and the lasso on his saddle bow, he rode over the eternal prairie in search of adventures and ready at any moment for the drama that might be awaiting him. To his other qualities must be added a generous hos pitality, that dispensed to all comers his more or less well-gotten goods, and the material for an admirable leader in revolutionary times. I saw no revolutions, and I hope that Argentina has finished with them forever, but the periodic explosions that have taken place there are not so ancient but that an echo of them reached my ear. I shall leave out of the question, of course, all more remote circumstances that might serve at hazard to put a body of adventugers in motion. You were on the side of Gen. X. or Gen. Z., according to the hopes of the party, and that was the least essential point. When the signal was once given, a military force had to be organized, and the means adopted were admirably simple. Any weapon that could be of use in battle was picked up, and a band would present itself at the door of an estancia. "We are for Gen. X. All the péons here must follow us. To arms! To horse!" And the order would be obeyed. Otherwise, the estancia and its herds would suffer. With such a system of recruiting, troops were quickly collected, and a few such visits would suffice to bring together a very respectable force of men. My friend Biessy, the artist, with whom I had the pleasure of making the journey, witnessed just such a scene one day at an estancia that he was visiting. He was chatting with the overseer when the man, hearing a suspicious sound, flung himself down and pressed his ear to the ground. A moment later he rose looking anxious. "There are horsemen galloping this way. What can have happened?" And

sure enough, a minute later, there appeared a band of men so oddly equipped that at first they were taken for masqueraders. It was carnival time. The leader, however, came forward and called on the overseer to place all his peons at the service of the revolutionaries. Biessy himself only escaped by claiming the rights of a French citizen. And do not imagine that all this was a comedy. The dominant sentiment in their camp was by no means a respect for human life. On both sides these brave peons fought furiously, asking no questions about the party in whose cause they happened to

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## THE PAMPAS OF ARGENTINA AS SEEN BY CLEMENCEAU

## (Continued from page 3.)

be enrolled. The overseer of a neighboring estancia, who was talking with M. Biessy when called to parley with the revolutionaries, was shot dead a few hours later for having offered resistance to them.

If men are thus unceremoniously enrolled—I use the present tense because one never knows what may happen—it may be imagined the horses are borrowed still more freely. A curious thing is that when the war is over and these creatures are again at liberty they find their way back to their own pastures quite easily by themselves.

The overseer of one estancia told me that the last revolution had cost him six hundred horses, of which four hundred, that had been taken a distance of from 200 to 300 kilometers, returned of their own accord. How they contrive to steer their course over the pampas with their inextricable tangle of wire fencing, I do not undertake to explain. I inquired of the overseer whether it were not possible to steal one of his horses without his noticing it:

"Oh," he said, "it is like picking an apple in Normandy! It often happens, no doubt that a traveler on a tired horse lassoes another to continue his journey. But on reaching his destination he sets the animal at liberty and he invariably makes his way back to the herd."

I have already spoken of the time when the gaucho would fell an ox to obtain a the railway which is its most effectual steak for luncheon. In some of the more remote districts it is possible that the custom still subsists. But it is none the less true that a growing civilization, and and rapid instrument, are changing the gaucho together with his surroundings and his sphere of action. The gaucho on foot is very like any other man. His flowing necktie of brilliant color, once the

party signal, has been toned down. His poncho, admirably adapted to the climatic conditions of camp life in the campo, is now used by the townsmen, who throw it over their arm or shoulder according to the variations in the temperature. The sombrero, like the slashed breeches or high boots, is no longer distinctive. There remains only the heavy stirrup of romantic design, more or less artistically ornamented, but now often replaced by a simple ring or rope of iron. The days of roystering glamour are passed. heavy roller of civilization levels all the elements of modern existence to make way for the utilitarian, but inaesthetic triumph of uniformity. Yet a little longer and the life of the campo will be nothing but a memory, for with his picturesque former dress the former man himself is disappearing.

The modern gaucho has preserved from his predecessor the discretion in speech, the reserved manner and scrutinizing eye of the man who lives on the defensive. But from every pore he distils civilization, and he can stroll down Florida Street in Buenos Aires without attracting any attention. It is in vain that the theatre seeks to reproduce the life of the campo as I saw it attempted at the "Apollo." What

can it show us beyond the eternal comedy of love or the absurdities of the wife of the gaucho who has too suddenly made his fortune, and both subjects belong to all times and all countries in the same way as every dance and every song are common to any assembly of young hu-Long before the gramophone was invented the guitar was the joy of Spanish ears to the furthest confines of the pampas. Between two outbreaks of civil war, when men were rushing madly to meet death, joyous songs and plaintive refrains alternated beneath the branches of the ombu, where the youth of the district met, and the sudden dramas of the rancho made them the more eager to drink deep of the pleasure they knew to be fleeting. They danced the "Pericou" and the "Tango," as they still do to-day, and the audacious gestures in which amorous Spain gave expression to the ardor of its feelings have now passed into the domain of history. The "Creole balls," where may be seen graceful young girls in soft white draperies, dancing in a chain that resembles our "Pastourelle," have been reproduced on postcards and are familiar to all. There are, there will ever be, in the pampas—at least I fondly hope so-graceful young girls dressed in white and destined to rouse the love instinct which never seems to sleep in an Italian or Spanish breast. But the very trouble we take to reconstitute on the stage for the edification of travelers from Europe the real Tango in all the antique effrontery of its ingenuousness, proves that the heroic age, made up of the naif and the barbarous, is fast losing its last vestiges of character in the wilderness of chariot civilized monotony. The Tango is disappearing rapidly. On the other hand, at Rio de Janeiro, in the flower of my seventieth year, I actually figured in the official quadrille of the President of the Republic to the shame of French choregraphy. Alas! Alas!